



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH  
*1102 SE Quince Street • PO Box 47990  
Olympia, Washington 98504-7990*

February 4, 2003

Thurston County Board of Health Members  
Thurston County Public Health and Social Services  
412 Lilly Road NE  
Olympia, WA 98506-5321

Dear Board of Health Members,

For many years, the State Board of Health has held regular meetings in local health jurisdictions across the state to better understand local concerns, including those of local boards of health. We believe our efforts should strengthen and support your own, since you are the prime overseers of public health operations. Now, budget cuts are forcing us to reduce the number of times we meet and to meet more frequently in Olympia. These same budget cuts, however, make it more important than ever that we understand your perspectives. We are taking several steps we hope will improve information flow and deepen our partnerships with you who serve on local boards of health.

To begin with, our staff has contacted your office in recent weeks to ask that we be added to your meeting minutes mailing list if we are not already on it. Starting this month, we will highlight local board of health minutes in the FYI section of our meeting agendas. We hope these summaries will improve our members' familiarity with the issues facing local boards. We will distribute these summaries to those who receive our agendas and make them available on our Web page so you can get a glimpse of how your colleagues at other local boards of health are coping with the very challenges that confront you.

If you would like us to mail you this information regularly, please ask to be added to our mailing list. You will receive these summaries as part of monthly announcements about state board meetings. These mailings also contain a brief summary of the leading public health, medical and other media articles on health issues and a listing of upcoming state, regional and national health-related meetings and conferences. These announcements contain electronic links to our Web page where you can always find up-to-date summaries of the major developments, work products and decisions at the State Board of Health together with downloadable versions of most of our major work products. It is available on line anytime at our Web page at [www.doh.wa.gov/sboh](http://www.doh.wa.gov/sboh).

While we expect these efforts will help each of us improve our knowledge of the other's perspectives, we know there is no substitute for face-to-face discussions. That is why, if they haven't already, our staff will be calling you in the coming weeks to ask that Don Sloma, our executive director, and I have a few moments to meet with you or your entire board at or near the time and place of one of your upcoming board meetings. Our goal for these talks is to hear your views of how public health activities are faring in your community.

We know the specter of reductions in state financial support is paramount in many of your minds. We know you are coping with repeated efforts to audit, survey, measure and assess your operations. We have been briefed on the results of the recent assessment against the Public Health Improvement Partnership Standards. We know some of you are wondering what local public health's role should be in bioterrorism, in emerging infectious diseases, in regard to West Nile virus and other environmental health challenges, in the epidemic of obesity, in tobacco control, in the rekindling crisis in access to and affordability of medical care, and more.

But to do our jobs better, we would like to hear how you are coping with the strengths (and weaknesses) of both your local public health efforts and the community with which you work to assure a safer and healthier population. How are you coping with funding shortages, regulatory and accountability demands, the need for ever better trained and more widely expert staff, strained community medical resources and social supports, and divergent community attitudes toward the role of government in health areas? Are there messages we can help you bring to Olympia or better ways of doing our business that will increase state government's usefulness to you?

We do not plan a lengthy presentation about the State Board of Health, the Department of Health, or state government policy. We have no new program to offer. We simply hope to hear from you. If you have any questions about this request, or would like to discuss it, please feel free to call me at (425) 827-8218 or Don Sloma at (360) 236-4102.

Thank you and we look forward to meeting you and hearing your thoughts soon about your efforts to create a safer and healthier Washington in these difficult times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Linda Lake". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small dot above the "i" in "Lake".

Linda Lake  
Chair, Washington State Board of Health